

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated July 15, 2005. Claims 1, 58, 60 and 67 remain pending in the application, with Claims 61 to 66 and 68 having been canceled. Claims 1 and 58 are the independent claims herein. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 58, 60 and 67 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. The rejection of Claim 1 is traversed since the Office Action failed to point out any particular unclarity in the claim. That is, since the Office Action failed to specify what is alleged to be unclear in Claim 1, Applicants simply cannot respond other than that the rejection itself is flawed.

As for the question on the “history” of Claim 58, the claim is clear that the history is “regarding the used consumable returned by the user” and that it “corresponds to the user log-in information.” Accordingly, the rejection is traversed since the claim is clear on its face and would be readily understood by those skilled in the art.

As for the rejection of Claims 67 and 68, the language in question for Claim 67 has been amended to make it even clearer, while Claim 68 has been cancelled. Thus, reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 112 rejections are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 58, 60, 67 and 68 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,233,409 (Haines), or alternatively under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Haines, and Claims 1, 58, 60, 67 and 68 were rejected under § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,629,134 (Hayward). Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

The present invention concerns the return of used consumables by a user. According to one aspect of the invention, participating information, indicating whether or

not a user wishes to participate in a return service corresponding to a particular type of consumable is received by an information processing system. A participating flag corresponding to the user is set in a memory unit in accordance with the participating information. Then, first information containing data fields is transmitted to at least one of the plurality of terminals for display on a screen to allow the user to input data into the data fields to order a new consumable and to specify the return of a used consumable.

Additionally, second information is transmitted for display on the screen of at least one of the plurality of terminals, which includes a message (a) prompting the user to participate in the return service in a case where at least one participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user does not already participate in the return service, or (b) indicating a history regarding the return of the used consumable by the user and an incentive point corresponding to the history in a case where a participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user already participates in the return service.

With specific reference to the claims, amended independent Claim 1 is a processing method of ordering a new consumable to be used by a printer and returning a used consumable, used by the printer, being performed by an information processing system that communicates with a plurality of terminals via the Internet, the method comprising the steps of receiving participating information, indicating whether or not a user wishes to participate in a return service corresponding to a particular type of consumable, from at least one terminal of the plurality of terminals, wherein the return service is provided by the system to allow the user to return the used consumable, setting a participating flag corresponding to the user, which is managed by the information processing system, in a memory unit in accordance with the participating information, wherein the information processing system manages a plurality of participating flags

corresponding to different types of consumables ordered by the user, transmitting first information containing data fields to at least one of the plurality of terminals for display on a screen, and allowing the user to input data into the data fields to order the new consumable and to specify the return of the used consumable, and transmitting second information for display on the screen of at least one of the plurality of terminals, which includes a message (a) prompting the user to participate in the return service in a case where at least one participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user does not already participate in the return service, or (b) indicating a history regarding the return of the used consumable by the user and an incentive point corresponding to the history in a case where a participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user already participates in the return service.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of Claim 1, and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of transmitting second information for display on a screen of at least one of a plurality of terminals, which includes a message (a) prompting a user to participate in a return service in a case where at least one participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user does not already participate in the return service, or (b) indicating a history regarding the return of the used consumable by the user and an incentive point corresponding to the history in a case where a participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user already participates in the return service.

Haines is merely seen to disclose a lifetime consumable monitoring system that provides a warning to a user when a consumable item is expended or is near being expended. However, Haines is not seen to disclose or to suggest anything with regard to setting a flag indicating a user's participation in a return service for a consumable, much

less that second information for display on a screen of at least one of a plurality of terminals is transmitted to one of the terminals, which includes a message (a) prompting a user to participate in a return service in a case where at least one participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user does not already participate in the return service, or (b) indicating a history regarding the return of the used consumable by the user and an incentive point corresponding to the history in a case where a participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user already participates in the return service. Accordingly, Claim 1 is not believed to be anticipated by Haines and is believed to be allowable over Haines.

Hayward is merely seen to disclose that, when a user buys a new device (e.g., a multifunction device), the user can register the device with the manufacturer so that they can obtain product support via the Internet. When, for example, an ink cartridge is low on ink, the user may be warned about the low ink level via a screen as shown in Fig. 4. If the ink level is low, the user can select a “buy now” option, whereby a link to a server is established and an order screen is downloaded to the user for them to order a new ink cartridge. Alternatively, if the user already has a new ink cartridge on-hand, they can select a “show me” button, whereby instructions are downloaded to the user’s computer to inform the user of how to replace the ink cartridge in the printer. Thus, while Hayward may provide the ability to order a new ink cartridge, Applicants fail to see anything, either inherently or explicitly, in Hayward that provides a return service for the user to return the used ink cartridge to the manufacturer. Accordingly, like Haines, Hayward also is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of transmitting second information for display on a screen of at least one of a plurality of terminals, which includes a message (a) prompting a user to participate in a return service in a case where at least one participating

flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user does not already participate in the return service, or (b) indicating a history regarding the return of the used consumable by the user and an incentive point corresponding to the history in a case where a participating flag corresponding to the user indicates that the user already participates in the return service.

In view of the foregoing deficiencies, amended independent Claim 1, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be allowable over Haines and Hayward.

In a related aspect of the invention according to Claim 58, a server receives user log-in information and reads history information, corresponding to the user log-in, regarding a used consumable returned by the user from a database. Based on the read history, an incentive point is determined. Additionally, at least one participating flag corresponding to the user log-in information is managed in a memory unit in accordance with a participation condition for a returning service of a user corresponding to the user log-in information. Finally, a message is sent to a terminal of the user in accordance with the participating flag corresponding to the user log-in information.

Referring specifically to the claims, amended independent Claim 58 is a processing method for returning a used consumable, used by a printer, being performed by an information processing system that communicates with a plurality of terminals via the Internet, the method comprising the steps of receiving user log-in information from one of the plurality of terminals, reading a history, which corresponds to the user log-in information, regarding the used consumable returned by the user from a database, determining an incentive point based on the history read in the reading step, managing at least one participating flag corresponding to the user log-in information in a memory unit

in accordance with a participation condition for a returning service of a user corresponding to the user log-in information, wherein the information processing system manages a plurality of participating flags corresponding to different types of consumables ordered by the user, and generating a message to be sent to one of the plurality of terminals in accordance with the participating flag corresponding to the user log-in information.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of Claim 58 and in particular, is not seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of managing at least one participating flag corresponding to user log-in information in a memory unit in accordance with a participation condition for a returning service of a user corresponding to the user log-in information, wherein a plurality of participating flags corresponding to different types of consumables ordered by the user are managed, and generating a message to be sent to one of a plurality of terminals in accordance with the participating flag corresponding to the user log-in information.

As discussed above, Applicants fail to see any disclosure in Haines or Hayward of a return service or managing participating flags regarding the user's participation in the return service. Accordingly, neither Haines or Hayward are seen to disclose or to suggest at least the feature of managing at least one participating flag corresponding to user log-in information in a memory unit in accordance with a participation condition for a returning service of a user corresponding to the user log-in information, wherein a plurality of participating flags corresponding to different types of consumables ordered by the user are managed, and generating a message to be sent to one of a plurality of terminals in accordance with the participating flag corresponding to the user log-in information.

In view of the foregoing deficiencies of the applied art, amended

independent Claim 58, as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are believed to be allowable.

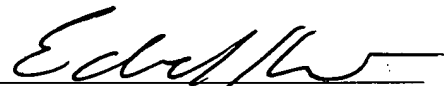
No other matters having been raised, the entire application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

REQUEST FOR EXAMINER INTERVIEW

In the event that the Examiner finds the application is not yet in condition for allowance, he is respectfully requested to contact Applicants' undersigned representative prior to issuance of the next Office Action on the merits to discuss any outstanding issues so that Applicants can obtain the earliest possible allowance of this case.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office by telephone at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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